

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 PA-01 PRS-01
INR-07 ACDA-12 NSC-05 USIA-06 EB-08 SS-15 SP-02
MCE-00 L-03 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /098 W
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R 021333Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7956
INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY MADRID
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0373

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MAS, MO, AG
SUBJ: MFA DEMARCHE ON SALE OF ARMS TO MOROCCO

REFS: A) ALGIERS 0367; B) STATE 025987; C) STATE 025988

1. AT HIS REQUEST, I MET AT 1000 HOURS ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2,
(REFTEL A) WITH MFA DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH
AMERICAN AFFAIRS, AMINE KHERBI. HE EXPLAINED THAT PURPOSE OF THE
MEETING WAS TO OBTAIN CLARIFICATION AND EXPLANATION OF THE NEW YORK
TIMES REPORT OF JANUARY 31 (REFTEL B) THAT DEPT WAS DISCUSSING WITH
CONGRESS INCREASED ARMS ASSISTANCE TO MOROCCO.

2. REFERRING TO THE DEPT'S RESPONSE TO A SIMILAR DEMARCHE MADE BY
THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR OF THE ALGERIAN EMBASSY ON THE SAME SUBJECT
ON JANUARY 31 (REFTEL C) I MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. WHAT IS INVOLVED IS A STATE DEPT. CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS
ON THE LATITUDE PERMITTED BY FEDERAL LAW IN RESPONDING TO THE GOM
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REQUEST AND NOT A USG DECISION TO SELL THE REQUESTED ARMS TO
MOROCCO;

B. IT IS QUITE NORMAL FOR SUCH CONSULTATIONS TO TAKE PLACE WHEN
FEDERAL LAW IS INVOLVED AND WHEN THE DEPT IS WEIGHING ALTERNATIVE
COURSES OF ACTION;

C. GOA SHOULD, NEVERTHELESS, UNDERSTAND THAT SUCH CONSULTATION
IS TAKING PLACE IN CONTEXT OF LONG-STANDING U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE

AGREEMENT WITH MOROCCO OF WHICH GOA WELL AWARE;

D. FACT OF CONSULTATION DOES NOT REPRESENT ANY CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY OF NEUTRALITY ON THE ISSUE AND U.S. PREFERENCE TO SEE PROBLEM RESOLVED IN CONTEXT OF PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS.

3. KHERBI ASKED ME TO SPECULATE ON WHAT ULTIMATE USG DECISION MIGHT BE. I REFUSED TO DO SO, SAYING THAT SUCH SPECULATION IS DANGEROUS BECAUSE IT COULD NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION FUTURE EVENTS ABOUT WHICH NONE OF US HAS ANY KNOWLEDGE.

4. HE ALSO ASKED WHETHER THE TIMES' LINKING THE CONSIDERATION OF ARMS SALES TO MOROCCO TO OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICY WAS ACCURATE. I REPLIED THAT I WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY DELIBERATE LINKING OF THESE ISSUES. HOWEVER, I ADDED THAT ONE SHOULD NOT IGNORE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESSURE FROM VARIOUS GROUPS IN THE U.S. TO HELP THOSE COUNTRIES WHO HAVE BEEN HELPFUL TO US.

5. KHERBI SAID HE APPRECIATED THE DISTINCTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS I HAD MADE AND PROMISED TO GET BACK TO ME IF HE NEEDED ADDITIONAL HELP IN EXPLAINING THE DEPT ACTION TO HIS SUPERIORS.

6. COMMENT: IT IS WORTH NOTING THE RELATIVELY LOW LEVELS CHOSEN BY THE GOA TO MAKE THE DEMARCHES ON THIS MATTER TO US BOTH IN WASHINGTON (POLITICAL COUNSELOR) AND IN ALGIERS (REGIONAL OFFICE DIRECTOR). SIMILARLY NOTEWORTHY IS THE UNUSUALLY FACTUAL HANDLING (E.G. QUOTING DEPT SPOKESMAN WITHOUT EDITORIALIZING) OF THE MOROCCAN ARMS
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SALES ISSUE IN THE FRENCH-LANGUAGE PRESS AND NO MENTION OF IT AT ALL IN THE ARABIC-LANGUAGE PRESS HERE. I CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT GOA DECISION-MAKERS ARE PRE-OCCUPIED WITH CURRENT DISAPPOINTING STANDFAST SUMMIT MEETING IN ALGIERS AND THAT THEY WISH TO AVOID STILL FURTHER INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION BY STIRRING UP TROUBLE WITH US.HAYNES

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